

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

W - e - C - r - e - a - t - e - O - u - r - L - i - v - e - s -

Editor's Note: Following is a recent page from my spiritual notebook.

Dear Friends,

Sunday nights at ten o'clock my husband and I often sit side by side in our living room and end our weekend with TV's detective show, "*Missing Without a Trace.*" Over several years, I have also enjoyed following Agent Samantha's personal story. Recently, I was riveted to an episode where she relived a girlhood incident:

A teenage Samantha pedaled her bike through dark trees and down a remote dirt path. When she heard her sister's screams, she knew she had guessed where the man took Sister after he nabbed her.

The fifteen-year-old dropped her bike near the shack, ran up to it and peeked through a space left when the sliding wood door didn't completely close. Sister screamed and struggled. Barely seventeen, her sister lay on her back against a workbench, panties hanging from one ankle. His back to her, the big man leaned and held Sister's wrists as he pinned her body with his, pushing himself between her legs.

At the sight, Sam let out a small screech. Hearing herself, she covered her mouth and hid. The man glanced over his shoulder toward the sound, but saw nothing and turned back to Sister.

Shaking with rage the little teen drew a long breath, her eyes steely with intent. She glanced around. A crowbar lay atop empty wood crates near the shed's doorway. Grabbing it, she squeezed through the opening left by the slider. She crept up behind the still bent man, raised her weapon and clubbed him. He crumpled, but her rage took over. She struck him again and again.

Suddenly she could not raise her arm. That's when she noticed Sister holding it down. Sister said simply, "I think he's dead."

The TV screen darkened and CBS's detective story went to a commercial break. Agent Samantha's flashback ended, but mine had just begun.

I was seventeen the Sixties summer when my folks rented a lake cottage twenty miles from town. Despite the expense and long round trip to work, I heard Mother tell friends it was, "...worth it for Frank's health." In a whisper she'd add, "His heart, you know." Then raise her eyebrows and nod slightly.

One Saturday night I was playing my new 45s on the front porch and singing along, "See y-o-u in Sep-tem-em-ber, see you when the summer's through..."

"Close the door, will you?" Mother called as she, Daddy and friends Barb and Don sat down at the dining room table to play cards.

I closed the door and lounged on the day bed, thinking of my far away boyfriend and singing along. Suddenly, over the record's crooning, I heard shouts. I ran and opened the porch door.

The card-players were gone and red-backed cards splashed on the table. Angry voices came from the kitchen. I dashed there and scanned the scene. *(Continued.)*

Beyond the sink and cabinets, my ashen- faced daddy stood looking out the back screen door. White and stiff, Mother clutched his right arm. Behind them, Barb and Don craned their necks to see out the door and whispered to each other.

I grabbed Barb’s arm, “What’s going on?”

She leaned to me and said in a staccato whisper, “Your Uncle Bill. – He’s drunk. – He wants to fight your dad.”

My eyes got wide. “*Not Daddy!*” I thought in a panic. I pushed past her to my dad’s left side. On the back steps I saw Uncle Bill, yelling and waving his fist. A little muscle in Daddy’s cheek tightened. His left hand rested on the screen door’s handle. Mother pleaded, “Frank! No! Your h-e-a-r-t!”

Just then Uncle Bill stepped onto the stoop. He swore. Daddy cursed back and the screen door opened.

The next thing I remember, Uncle Bill was lying on his back in the grass and I was sitting on his chest, pounding his face.

Someone grabbed my fist mid- air. I looked up and saw Mother. In a calm but stern voice she said, “Fritzie! That’s enough!”

Like *Trace’s* Samantha, I lost track of time that night. In a protective fury I must have pushed through the door ahead of my dad and knocked Uncle Bill to the ground. Seizing my advantage, I punished him.

I never saw my uncle again, but fared better than the Agent Samantha. Uncle Bill was not hurt much. And several decades later, I wrote my uncle and apologized for what I did that night. In old- fashioned wet ink script he responded, “Sorry about that night. It was all a misunderstanding. I forgive you.”

Like Agent Samantha I carry a poisonous memory. Unlike her I didn’t kill Uncle Bill and he graciously forgave me.

Frances Fritzie

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- - - - **A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E - -**
-
- (Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

I loved your Apr. ’07 letter on cream symbols in your coffee cup. Symbols are so gentle and helpful to my psyche. They allow me to see parts of myself and my life in a different perspective. (It sounds like they work that way for you, too.) I recalled our tea-leaf reading sessions, and I also love doing that. My favorite tea for readings is a mixture of peppermint, rose hips and ground star anise.

You said you liked my little story about the photo I sent you. It was a shore line shot of my Michigan Upper Peninsula property. I call the place, Tredways’s Fen”. (*See next.*)

At one time I thought about putting "Tredway" somewhere in my name since it was my father's last name and he had no boys to carry it on after his death. I opted against that idea but I came up with this name for my little piece of "wetland."

That's all for now.

Love,
Palma

Palma (Apr. '07) adds, "one day soon I will bring you up to date on "Tredway's Fen".

Frances,

In the April '07 issue, I read again a comment on depression. I think every woman has some story of a depression or sadness.

I overcame my whole struggle thing with depression by going to counseling for my daughter's passing. I became aware of life again and came out of the depression shell that was trying to suffocate me. These days I seem to have a different outlook on things.

I hafta' say again, keep up the great work with *Ninepatch*

Luv' ya'
Take care
CaT

CaT (Feb. '07) adds, "I learned through experience that basically, one has two choices: stay connected to this world (and live life to its fullest) or check out. I don't think ANYTHING is worth checking out for -- there is way too much we all need to do here on earth while we can. I'm DOING it."

Dear Frances,

Hello to you!

My year opened medically. I had surgery to remove a cyst from my leg -- the same leg I had operated on not long ago. I have an appointment to see my surgeon for a release to return to work. If he says I'm OK, I know my husband will be pleased. He thinks I am happy if I am busy. He wants me on my feet.

I always find something in *Ninepatch*. I can see myself in Lynn TROR's article, "Subtle Abuse" from March '07. My husband is like her ex-. Mine says talking about present troubles only makes them last. He also says, "Forget it!" Like Lynn's ex- apparently he thinks I can.

For a long time now, my husband has not been talking to me much. Maybe it started more than a year ago with his head injury, or it might be due to his more recent diabetes. No matter the reason, it is hard on me.

I feel like Lynn who said, that one of the hardest things about being with her ex- was feeling alone. As she wrote, "I can easily feel robbed and cheated because of his attitude."

I want so bad for this marriage to work out. We have been separated and gotten back together three times! Sadly, the cycle of our troubles seems to repeat and repeat. (*Next.*)

There are a few bright spots, though. A few weeks ago our married daughter brought us supper, and the grandchildren made me “Get Well” cards. I had lots of hugs.

However right now, I just eat and sleep -- and slowly heal. I am taking it all one day at a time. Soon I will be able to go back to work. Then our quiet, normal routine will return -- and I will keep busy.

God bless you and keep you safe.

Love and Prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Apr. '07) adds, “Like my husband, my bossy hard-to-please mom used to also say I was happy when I was busy. Recently when my husband and I were having a bad day, my dad (who now lives with us) said to me, ‘He is just like your mother.’ That’s odd, because Mom used to say, ‘You’re just like your dad!’ All I can see is while I have always been a Daddy’s Girl I always tried hard to please my mom.”

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Frances,

This is just a short note since I am still on retreat.

The process has included presentations by several people on mission work and all that it implies. I have met regularly with the coordinator of the discernment process. I have been very open about my thoughts and reflections.

Also, I met regularly with a counselor and with the other six people in group. Now, during the retreat, I had a spiritual director, too. Everything was done every day.

My experience was very intense and the resulting recommendation is that I have some further preparation to do before I go into the field. This is because of important issues that have come out during our sessions.

Eventually I will get to the missions, but the place I go may change. I have realized that I need communication -- support and companionship that is not commonly available.

So, I will wait and see what God has in mind for me. I will continue to hold you close in prayer and hope that you will do the same for me.

With love,

Patience

Patience (Apr. '07) adds, “I did lots of deep, guided inner work. I also journaled and did art work around reflections and prayer. It was quite an experience.”

Art stimulates the imagination.

James (Apr. '07) continues, “Art touches people in many different ways.”

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(See *FABRICS* on the next page.)

- - - -F-A-B-R-I-C-S- - - -
(Our Experiences)

MY BEST BIRTHDAY EVER

Three years ago on my way home from Florida I stopped at my son's home near Louisville, Kentucky. It was on or near my birthday, so he and his wife had a birthday cake for me, and a few presents.

My son said that the first of three presents for my *special* birthday was a round of golf at a fancy club, designed by golf great, Fuzzy Zeller. (My son and I had golfed there a few years before and enjoyed the course.) Unfortunately, it rained that night so we couldn't go golfing.

The next day, my son then asked me when was the last time I attended a baseball game. I had to think back a bit, but came up with the approximate time. It was 1943. I was in the army getting ready to go overseas to England. I was with a couple of fellow GI's and we attended a game at Yankee Stadium in New York. It was also my nineteenth birthday!

My son asked, "Isn't it about time to attend another baseball game?" I agreed it was. So, off we went to Louisville Slugger Stadium where he had season tickets. Attending the game was present number two.

When we arrived at the stadium, my son made a call on his cell phone. Then, he said someone wanted to meet me. So, we went up to the mezzanine where he introduced me to two stadium officials. My son turned to me and said, "Dad, gift number three is, you are going to throw out the first ball of the game!"

I got weak in the knees. I told him that I hadn't thrown a baseball since he was just a kid. The officials said that was a problem they could handle. They took me down to the bull pen where some players showed me how to hold and throw the ball!

At an appointed time, I was escorted to the mound, and my name announced on the PA system. I stepped up on the mound. (It really is *quite* high.) The officials chuckled and one told me if I threw the ball eighty miles an hour or faster, they wanted to sign me up.

Well, I did all the things I see the pitcher doing on TV. I spit on my hand, squeezed the ball, and hitched up my pants. Then I pulled my cap down, leaned forward wound up and let that stitched white leather fly.

My son and a photographer took pictures! The catcher signed the ball, and we retired to watch the game.

I've received many birthday presents during my lifetime, but none so unusual as numbers two and three! I'll never, never forget that birthday!

Le

(Continued on the next page)

Le (Feb. '07) adds, "I still have the ball and some photos. I'll put the ball in a trophy case along with the pictures and leave them for my son to inherit someday."

AMAZING AND AWESOME,
KATIE SCARLETT

My new horse, Katie Scarlett, is here on the property. I kept her original name – it seemed somehow fitting.

The weather has changed again from the mild temperatures of early winter to the howling cold and snow of deep winter. The sorrel quarter horse seems to be taking that bitter change without comment. I'm in awe of that physical ability about her, that sheer endurance.

Once we were in the midst of a snow storm, the outside temperature was seventeen degrees and dropping. The wind was blustering between ten or twenty miles per hour. Katie's tail was blowing around like some out of control snake but she was placidly munching on the hay that I left out for her earlier in the morning. Amazing!

Katie's a monstrous big animal to me, but has a very gentle and placid nature. I feel like a child again when I watch Katie do things that only horse owners usually see. For example, I saw her roll on the ground. Her impact made the snow fly up around her in a great white puff.

Awesome!

Linda (Mar. '07) adds, "I am reading a lot about horses, as I know next to nothing about them. It has been illuminating to learn about their character/ behavior. I have owned dogs and cats in the past but they are predator species. The horse is prey species. This evolution dictates how they react and relate to the world.

I am working to shift my pet- buddy perspective to fit how Katie sees the world. I'm gravitating towards the gentler books of training methods and how to think horse.

Currently I am reading, The Tao of Equus: A Woman's Journey of Healing and Transformation Through the Way of the Horse by Linda Kohanov."

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NO LANDING GEAR?

My husband is a pilot. He's retired now but still owns a plane -- and sometimes two -- so he's never really stopped flying. In fact, he gives lessons and is licensed by the FAA to test other pilot's proficiency levels. Recently I had a scary experience with him and his flying.

A pilot friend, Don, and his wife, Sarah, flew into our small central Florida town in their twin engine airplane. We had a weekend visit planned. The first day I was at home, teaching Sarah how to watercolor. My husband, George, was giving Don a twin engine check ride to test Don's skill levels.

My cell phone rang. I picked it up and it was George calling me from the airplane. He said they lost all electrical power and all radio contact. Since they lost electrical power, they could not lower the landing gears.

He told me he called 911 on his cell phone and got a 911 operator in Georgia. That operator notified our home town police about the dangerous situation. *(Continued next.)*

Sarah and I jumped in our car and sped to the airport. The police and firemen were already at the airfield, watching the circling plane and waiting. I had never hung up on George and talked to him the whole time. Once I got to the small airport, George asked if the landing gear was down. He said he and Don were trying to lower the gear manually.

As the plane flew overhead it *looked* liked the wheels were down, but a nearby policeman shook his head. The guy was using a pair of binoculars and said the wheels were only about a third of the way down. The man in blue asked for my cell phone and he talked to George.

After five more passes over the airport and five more attempts to lower landing gear, the wheels finally came all the way down. We all gave a sigh of relief and greeted the fliers with great smiles and hollers of joy!

There's never a dull moment with George!!!

Lynan (Mar. '07) adds, "I was amazed that I never panicked. I think that I was in a state of shock!!! After the police questioned us for their records, the four of us went out to eat. It was a celebration, for sure."

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EMBARASSED BY FACTS

I learned the first facts about sex at home. My parents also had a "book." It was a medical book and it had transparent pages that laid over one another to "peel the onion" of the human body in between vast pages of text that I couldn't understand at all. I was mesmerized by those transparent pages. They were like clues in a treasure map. Neither the muscles, stomach, intestines nor liver held much fascination for me. The most interesting ones, were the ones showing the reproductive organs.

One day, I was sitting on the bed in my room trying to make sense of the pictures. I didn't have a clue about how all this created a baby, but I was amazed to learn what was under the clothing of adults.

Suddenly my dad popped his head in the door to tell me something. I slapped the book shut and slid it under a pillow.

"What have you got there?" To my guilty conscience his voice fairly boomed at me.

"Nothing," I replied, my face burning with shame.

"Show me!" he demanded, as he stepped into the room, towering his six foot-two frame over me.

"All right..." my voice quivered as I pulled the heavy, blue bound book from under my pillow. "I was just looking at the pictures!"

All at once he apparently recognized the dark blue volume I held. He turned scarlet and mumbled something like, "Yes, of course. You need to understand these things!"

He turned on his heel and walked out.

Nothing followed. My dad explained nothing and my mom explained nothing.

Thank goodness for sex education film strips at school.

Georgene (Mar. '07) says, "I re-read Frances' story from February '07, about her experience with being taught the facts of life by her mother. I had to laugh even though she described being so tortured by it. (Oh, the drama of being elementary school age!)"
(Continued on the next page.)

OUR SPECIAL TOPIC

June '07 begins our new, Special Topic, "A Defining Moment in my Life".
Further comments on "Something Stolen" are always welcome
and will appear in the **FABRICS** section.

THE SPIRIT OF MY WORK

What are the adjectives that pop into your mind when you hear the term, "homeless person"? Each homeless person I have met is a unique individual with their own life circumstances -- just like each one of us.

In 1998 I began working with an agency that provides services to the homeless during the evening hours. I look back and see why I've endured in this work. Outreach to the homeless is such meaningful work, to be present with people whose lives have presented struggles beyond what most of us will face.

The main thing on the minds of many of the homeless folks I meet each night is survival. Things that we can take for granted, food and shelter, are a matter of life and death for those living on the streets. A sad fact is that there are far fewer beds available in shelters each night than there are homeless people.

Monday through Saturday nights my team goes out with our Health Outreach Bus. It provides free health care and hospitality. We have groups of volunteers with us each to distribute food: soup in the winter and hot dogs in the summer. We always have coffee and cookies as well as cocoa in the winter and lemonade in the summer.

The physical work is important, but I feel the spirit of my work best in one-on-one encounters and conversations I have with those I meet. A lot of my work is listening to these folks who are so often unheard.

In each situation, each person has a unique story -- just like each one of us. What I've heard over the years is just about everything. For example, a woman shared with me that she was disappointed in herself for drinking too much and having unprotected sex with men she met in bars. She talked about her feelings and revealed her emotional downslide a few months ago after her mother died. When we parted she thanked me for being there and said she was going to be responding to her sadness in a healthier way beginning that night.

The homeless have taught me that every day is a struggle and also that every day is precious.

Peter (Jan. '07) adds, "I consider myself fortunate that I have not become numb to seeing the homeless night after night. I still feel the same when I go home after my work. It always sits unpleasantly in me that many of the folks I spoke with during that evening

are sleeping on a shelter floor, under a bridge, or behind a garbage dumpster. I thank God I have a home!"

(Continued on the next page.)

- - I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S - -

(Reading and Listening)

SHADOW DIVERS

This book by Robert Kurson is the true adventure of two deep sea wreck divers. They became obsessed with the mystery of a sunken World War II German submarine, which is called a U-boat.

This gripping drama began when John Chatterton discovered a U-boat, at a depth of two hundred thirty feet, sixty miles off the coast of New Jersey in 1991. The search to identify it became a six- year odyssey for him and his partner, Richie Kohler.

In their relentless research, the men also got caught up in the history of the fifty-six crewmen who died aboard. Their dedication to their quest began to take a toll on the personal lives of the divers and their families.

Kurson is an excellent writer with an easy flowing style. He takes the reader inside the U-boat on many of the dives. The realism is startling.

This is a book for readers who like mystery and suspense.

June Poucher (Apr. '07) says: "Although I am not a mystery fan per se, I found this book hard to put down."

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MARY MARY

As I've progressed through several of James Patterson's novels about Detective Alex Cross, I've gradually developed a great appreciation of the way that the investigator always, no matter what killer he is pursuing, does his absolute best to put family values before work.

In a previous Cross adventure, the investigator's family was the target of various killers. Now, he's trying harder to protect his family and keep them on the sidelines.

In the novel, Mary Mary, FBI Agent Cross is on vacation with his family at Disneyworld. In the park he gets the call from his boss. He's told a vicious killer is targeting Hollywood A-List actresses who have "perfect families".

However, before his boss even asks him to help, Agent Cross registers his protest at being interrupted during his vacation. Eventually, because Cross is sensitive to "family" matters, he's talked into "just taking a quick peek at the crime scene". He does that but, after he returns to his family and their vacation, he is notified that now he has no choice -- he is being put on the case.

After following countless leads, Cross ends up in Vermont investigating the psychological past of a suspect named Mary. Before he heads back to Los Angeles, he ends up confronting the killer.

The novel reaches a surprising conclusion, and once again Agent Cross returns home to find himself and his family out of danger. *(Continued on the next page.)*

Bookworm (Apr. '07) adds, "I have read murder mysteries by several authors but James Patterson's Alex Cross novels, are definitely at the top of my list in terms of their suspense and their thrilling endings."

- T-H-R-E-A-D -

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

REMEMBERING SONJA HENIE

**My childhood idol
inspired frozen frog pond forays
hours on end.**

**Her name was on the lips
of everyone in 1936.**

**This Norwegian beauty
won the Olympic figure skating
championship three times and
Hollywood made her
Queen of the Ice.**

**Jumping, turning, gliding,
wind in my face,
I skated into adulthood
still trying to do a double axle.**

**The spinning stopped
finally, when grandma tried to
inspire her grandkids
to sail the ice with grace.**

**Two broken bones in my arm
are yelling at me now,**

“You're not going to skate to the finish with us!”

Continued on the next page.)

Gail (Apr, '07) says, “In seventy years I had not broken a bone in this body. It was my turn. It was also another convincer that age is in the mind! I had not been skating in twenty years, but was sure it would be a cinch. Bones age, but the mind does not!”

*

May Ninepatch Birthdays

Lynn TROR 17

Linda 10

James 19

Le 19

**--M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G-- T-H-E
--H-O-U-S-E--
(Ninepatch Business)**

GET TO KNOW ME

Editor's note: Here is the latest set of responses to our monthly questions—our new effort to get to better know our readers.

This month's question: *What/who do you admire the most?*

June Poucher (See her book review in INSTRUCTIONS) writes, “One of the people I most admire was my sponsor/mentor in my Twelve Step Program. When I was a newcomer, it was suggested to me that I look around and find someone whose talk and actions I admired. I chose Helen. She was consistent in that she lived her convictions in good times and bad. She respected my confidences. She really listened, heard me out but never gave advice. With her gentle smile, she would reach out, pat my hand and say, ‘You'll figure it out.’ And I have, mostly. She has passed away and I miss those talks with my friend.”

**

Christa Weber (Apr. '07) writes, “Upon first meeting my mother, you might think she's too immersed in her work for her own good. Yet it was the circumstances she coped with in her early adulthood that taught her the necessity and value of hard work. I admire her not because of the great effort she expends in the present, but because of the diligence and persistence she showed in the past, when she had no choice. She had me at

a very young age and was also divorced at a very young age ... and both factors contributed to our small family not having much money.

Christmases were lean and we lived in a tiny apartment. Bill collectors left their angry messages. My mother once stayed awake for five days straight so that she could work a regular day job and paint houses at night. She used one of those painting jobs to talk her way into a job in finance at a national company.

From there, her jobs involved money, computers, networks and networking. Because she knew one couldn't go far in her field without a proper degree, she spent almost a decade taking one or two nighttime courses a semester. She graduated with a business degree when I was twelve.

However, we still had very little money. We lived in an illegal apartment on the second floor of a house. This fact embarrassed and irked me greatly as a teenager.

Then came Mom's better jobs, more night classes and a master's degree from a top-rated business school. (Meanwhile I was working to earn my own bachelor's degree.) During all the years my mother struggled and studied, I saw that perseverance pays, but that lofty goals also demand tribute.

My mother went from being a poor, single parent with very few prospects to being a prized executive for a large software firm. Her second-hand jeans gave way to designer suits bought at Bloomingdales, and those small apartments moved aside for first homes and vacation homes.

Now my mother works too much. While the pattern of hardship that consumed most of her young adult life was eventually broken, she cannot escape the behaviors ingrained during that period of her existence.

Even as I tell Mom that she's working too hard, I understand why she's doing it and admire her greatly for it

Editor's note: *Congratulations to Christa Weber who is to be wed on May 19, 2007!*

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Next month's question: What pets do you have?

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